

Defensive Fires for the Light Force Brigade Rear

by Major Joseph M. Irby

The goal of base defense is to synchronize combat power to deny the enemy's ability to interdict the base's support mission. This article discusses tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) that static units in rear areas can use to be more successful in integrating all types of fires into their base defense.

These TTP apply to any base clusters, but this article specifically discusses the brigade support area (BSA), its tenants and the forward support battalion (FSB).

An effective BSA defense begins with solid home-station training that includes battle staff planning for combat operations and targeting meetings focused on base defense. This training also must familiarize BSA members with calls-for-fires, control of Army attack aviation and risk estimate distances.

Example Scenario. A Cortinian Liberation Front (CLF) force makes contact with an listening post/observation post (LP/OP) 200 meters outside the BSA perimeter and knocks out a machine gunner from the FSB. The assistant gunner mans the machinegun, suppressing the CLF squad, and a third soldier calls the FSB tactical operations center (TOC) and submits a size, activity, location, unit, time and equipment (SALUTE) report.

The FSB battle captain dispatches the quick-reaction force (QRF), a military police (MP) platoon, to reinforce the LP/OP. The BSA fire support officer (FSO) calls for fire on a pre-planned smoke target that is "at his command."

The MP squad leader calls the FSB TOC to inform them that two of the three men in the LP/OP are casualties and that three CLF are sniping at the MPs as they try to assist the wounded. The FSB battle captain verifies the MP squad location and the CLF location with the squad leader. The BSA FSO monitors the radio traffic with the squad leader, cancels "at my command" and tells the MP squad leader to be prepared to adjust the smoke.

The smoke round impacts, and the MP squad leader adjusts the mission onto the CLF and requests high-explosive (HE) in effect. Twelve rounds of 105-mm HE impact on the CLF, causing two casualties and forcing the remainder to break contact.

This fire mission for defense was successful because the commander and his BSA battle staff came together and deliberately decided on how and where to kill the enemy. This allowed the soldiers to find, fix and finish him. The battle staff conducted planning that focused on the *decide, detect, deliver* and *assess* methodology during the decision-making process for the base cluster defense. The plan was disseminated,

coordinated and completely rehearsed throughout the BSA and with the other appropriate agencies in the brigade combat team (BCT).

Planning for the Fight. The process begins with planning for the defense of the BSA. This is done by the FSB battle staff. The key members of the BSA's battle staff are the FSB executive officer (XO), S3, S2 and FSO. Frequently the FSB XO must focus on running the support battalion while synchronizing the staff, subordinate companies and tenant units.

The FSB XO's integration into the process is key for two reasons. One is because he has the experience and authority to work with the brigade staff. Secondly, he runs the BSA, ensuring tenants and subordinate companies fulfill their responsibilities to the BSA commander. The FSB S3, usually a non-branch qualified captain, is the linchpin in planning, coordinating and executing the defensive plans. The intelligence section occasionally consists of an NCO and officer, but one trend is that only one or the other is in the BSA. This thin staff section is responsible for predicting the enemy's actions toward the base cluster.

The FSB has no FSO, so filling that slot is done creatively. Infrequently, the position is filled by an excess officer or a fire support NCO—Military Occupa-



BSAs have a lot of heavy equipment coming and going— high-payoff targets for the enemy. This equipment must be protected.

tional Specialty (MOS) 13F Fire Support Specialist—from the direct support (DS) artillery battalion. Most of the time, the duty falls to the headquarters and service battery (HSB) commander who also commands a battery of 60 to 70 soldiers who are responsible for securing a portion of the BSA perimeter.

Whoever the FSO is, he must be knowledgeable and integrated into the BSA battle staff. Ideally, the unit would be able to train with the designated FSO at home station.

One option of integrating fire support personnel into the BSA command post (CP) is to collocate the DS artillery battalion's administrative and logistics operations center (ALOC) with the FSB TOC. Consequently, there is always a knowledgeable fire supporter with the proper communications platform in close proximity to the BSA's battle captain. It also allows for close coordination between the FA and brigade logisticians, as well as the FSB.

Another option is to assign one or more leaders from the FA ALOC as the BSA FSO/fire support element (FSE) and give the responsibility for planning, coordinating and rehearsing fires to them while the rest of the FA ALOC remains with the unit trains. This type of organization increases the difficulty in executing fires due to the added communications link. This option can work but takes thorough and repetitive rehearsals.

In planning fires for the BSA, the battle staff must conduct sound planning. A deliberate and integrated approach for planning is the doctrinal *decide, detect, deliver* and *assess* methodology used in targeting. The BSA targeting meeting is not as broad in spectrum as the one held at brigade or in a maneuver battalion because the BSA's targeting process is focused on force protection and defensive targets only. The methodology helps find, fix and finish the

enemy as he tries to interdict the activities of the base cluster. The battle staff decides what the target is, where it is likely to be and what its purpose is. This information comes from the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) and predictive analysis by the intelligence personnel at the FSB TOC.

Once the target is established, it must be detected. In the BSA, detection/collection assets are limited and usually relegated to LP/OPs and perimeter security patrols conducted by members of the BSA. Occasionally, an infantry unit is provided to help protect the BSA. The BSA's reconnaissance and surveillance plan will rely heavily on organic and tenant units.

Delivery means more than who or what is going to deliver effects on the target. The battle staff needs to develop attack criteria for each target that includes the trigger to initiate the target and the type of munitions. The battle staff assesses and manages the risks inherent in engaging the targets, in light of the rules of engagement (ROE) and the proximity of friendly units. The staff adheres to the ROE and does everything within its power to mitigate possibilities of fratricide. The delivery assets are usually not dedicated to support the base cluster, i.e., a priority target, a maneuver unit or attack aviation. The BSA battle staff's careful coordination for external assets facilitates responsive support when required.

For a more in-depth discussion of the military-decision making and the targeting processes, see the White Paper, "Fire Support Planning for the Brigade and Below," dated 12 May 1998, written by the Advanced Fire Support Branch of the Fire Support and Combined Arms Operations Department in the Field Artillery School, Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The White Paper also discusses the development of each target

by determining its task, purpose, method and effect, which ensures it supports the unit commander's intent and guidance. Readers can access the White Paper at website <http://sill-www.army.mil>.

Early Coordination. Battle staff coordination ahead will facilitate the timeliness and accuracy of the BSA future fires. The first is for the staff to request and coordinate for adequate terrain. Usually, the BSA boundary is the perimeter's protective wire obstacles while the terrain outside the wire belongs to a unit other than the FSB. This precludes timely clearance of fires because the fires must be cleared with the unit that controls the terrain outside the BSA's perimeter. Unit boundaries, by definition, are restrictive and permissive fire support coordination measures (FSCMs). Pushing the BSA boundary beyond the wire at least one terrain feature allows the BSA commander to clear fires internally.

The BCT could easily have a standing operating procedure (SOP) that allocates terrain to the base cluster, and through the targeting process, the BSA battle staff can further define the boundary. A well-defined boundary is easier to coordinate with adjacent units and higher headquarters, so when and where possible, the unit should use a global positioning system (GPS), such as an encrypted precision lightweight GPS receiver (PLGR), to accurately locate the boundary. These PLGR locations add definition and possibly target reference points to the BSA's defense diagram.

The extra terrain also provides freedom of maneuver for reconnaissance patrols and combat forces allocated to the BSA. With the terrain comes the responsibility of coordinating combat operations originating outside the BSA. These operations may include, but are not limited to counterfire missions or armed reconnaissance by aviation assets. Battle tracking units outside the wire identifies the units and helps clear fires rapidly.

The targeting process in the BSA produces a target list and a written order assigning responsibility to subordinate units for each target. Subsequent meetings update the target list that becomes part of BSA fragmentary orders, called FRAGOs. The BSA FSO submits the target list to the brigade FSE for approval, which then disseminates it to appropriate agencies. The fire support plan must be disseminated and rehearsed for the plan to be effective.

- 1 A trained forward observer (FO) with means of communicating with the brigade support area (BSA) fire support officer (FSO) informs the listening post/observation post (LP/OP) to react to the rehearsal scenario: a three-man enemy team moving along the avenue of approach (AA) overwatched by the LP/OP.
- 2 The LP/OP submits a size, activity, location, unit, time and equipment (SALUTE) report on the enemy sited to the forward support battalion (FSB) tactical operations center (TOC). The TOC then initiates a preplanned target that was located earlier by precision lightweight global positioning system receiver (PLGR). The FSB TOC warns the LP/OP of the ensuing fire mission and to adjust the smoke. The FSB TOC dispatches the quick reaction force (QRF) with a clear task and purpose.
- 3 The FSO at the fire support element (FSE) initiates the fire mission with the FA battalion fire direction center (FDC).
- 4 The FO who initiated the rehearsal scenario at the LP/OP gives the spottings to the radio/telephone operator (RTO) and coaches him to transmit the proper corrections to the FSO/FSE that, in turn, transmits them to FDC.
- 5 The QRF tactically maneuvers to an attack-by-fire position to engage the enemy and possibly assist in casualty evacuation (CASEVAC).
- 6 Smoke is adjusted on the desired location, the mission is ended, the target is recorded and a replotted grid is requested from the FDC.
- 7 The trained observer conducts an after-action review (AAR) with the LP/OP. The battle staff conducts an internal AAR that includes the QRF.
- 8 The FSO updates the target list with the brigade FSE. The BSA defensive diagram is updated, as required.
- 9 The immediate problems are corrected and the lessons learned are disseminated at the next tenant's meeting.

Rehearsal of the Combined Arms Defense of a Brigade Support Area. The rehearsal is thoroughly planned and coordinated among the battle staff and subordinate units. It occurs during stand-to and includes indirect fires and maneuver outside the perimeter by the QRF. The end state is one target has been registered and the QRF has maneuvered over terrain it may have to defend at a later time. The following are tested, trained and validated in the rehearsal: BSA communications plan, the QRF and fire support; danger-close FA target adjustment (including target location, calls-for-fire and adjustment procedures); QRF maneuver plan; and a realistic timeline for reacting to BSA's threats.

Rehearsals. The key to the swift and violent execution of any plan is rehearsals. The dissemination and rehearsal processes complement each other. They begin with the briefing of the fire support plan as part of the FSB operations order to the support companies and tenant units of the BSA. The information briefed is the target description, target number, location, responsibility for establishing and observing the target, ROE and shell-fuze combination. It also includes a detailed discussion of the communications plan for requesting fires and alerting the QRF. Each subordinate unit discusses its part of the fire support plan during the FSB commander's back brief.

After the daily targeting meeting, the battle staff updates the defense plan in writing and disseminates these changes at the daily tenants' meetings. The FSB XO or S3 discusses lessons learned from previous rehearsals and future rehearsal

plans. The FSB S3 leads BSA members through limited rehearsals, so they understand the process and the standards. This allows leaders to inform their subordinates and fully integrate rehearsal.

Well-orchestrated rehearsals can be a deterrent, if observed by the enemy. During Vietnam, static nodes frequently practiced "mad minutes" and verified target locations by actually firing the target. That was as much for the benefit of the enemy as it was for training drills.

Rehearsals occur soon after the arrival of the units in the BSA—certainly no later than the first stand-to or stand-down. This allows the enemy to see the unit is serious about defense as early as possible. Rehearsals should include everyone because it is a time to maneuver the BSA's QRF and internal reaction forces, practice reporting, check communications links and validate defensive plans. Although not the only times

to conduct rehearsals, conducting them at stand-to or stand-down are times when members of the BSA are focused on perimeter defense.

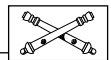
A good SOP, understood by all, improves rehearsals. Every member of the battle staff must fully understand his role in the conduct of the rehearsal. It is important that subordinate commanders and leaders understand and enforce the standards. The SOP paints a picture so all participants share the commander's vision for the rehearsal's end state.

There are some important actions to include in the rehearsal SOP. One is alerting units within the base cluster of the upcoming rehearsal. The alert notice validates part of the communications plan for the defense of the cluster. The FSB operations section notifies the brigade that a rehearsal is upcoming, its expected duration and the impact on logistics operations. The FSO notifies the brigade FSE and FA battalion TOC of upcoming missions, ensuring they understand the plan. Designated individuals should observe and record events in the rehearsal for an after-action review.

The scope and detailed execution of the rehearsal are limited only by the tactical situation and the imagination of those conducting it. The figure provides an example of a thorough rehearsal for the combined arms defense of a base cluster.

Timely and accurate fires are achievable in support of the BSA when they are planned, coordinated and rehearsed. By beginning the planning process early, mandating the battle staff's participation and focusing on the doctrinal decision-making process, the conditions are set for a successful perimeter defense.

Like all fires, rear area fires must be completely planned, fully coordinated and well-rehearsed.



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